

April 16th.
1680.

A

LETTER

FROM

A MINISTER to his FRIEND,

Concerning the GAME of

CHESS.

SIR,

I Here send you my Reasons for my refusing and declining the Game of Chess. This I premise, that I think Recreation to be in it self Lawful, yea that like Physick it is to some persons, and in some cases very needfull: Also that this Game of Chess is not only Lawful, but it may be the most ingenious and delightful that ever was invented: Others seem to be calculated for Children, this for Men; in most others there's much of Contingency, in this there's nothing but Art. But though it be never so lawful and eligible in it self, yet to me it is inexpedient. And there are some particular Reasons why I am fallen out with this Exercise, and I believe shall never be reconciled to it again; and they are such as follow.

1. It is a great Time-waster: How many precious hours (which can never be recall'd) have I profusely spent in this Game? O Chess, I'll be aveng'd of thee for the loss of my Time. 'Tis a true saying, That it is more necessary thriftiness to be sparing and saving of Time than of Money. One offered on his Death-bed a World of Wealth, for an Inch of Time; and another with great earnestness, cryed out, when she lay a dying; *Call Time again! call time again!* This I heard, says a worthy Minister, and I think the sound of it will be in my ears so long as I live.

2. It hath had with me a fascinating property: I have been bewitcht by it; when I have begun, I have not had the power to give over. Though a thing be never so lawfull yet I ought not to suffer my self to be brought under the power of it. I'll not use it, till I find I can refuse it. Reason and Religion shall order my Recreation.

3. It hath not done with me when I have done with it. It hath followed me into my Study, into my Pulpit; when I have been Praying, or Preaching, I have (in my thoughts) been playing at Chess; then I have had as it were a Chess-board before my eyes; then I have been thinking how I might have obtained the stratagems of my Antagonist, or make such and such motions to his disadvantage; nay, I have heard of one who was playing at Chess in his thoughts (as appear'd by his words) when he lay a-dying.

4. It hath caus'd me to break many solemn Resolutions, nay Vows and promises. Sometimes I have oblig'd my self in the most solemn manner, to play but so many Mates at a time, or with any one person, and anon I have broken these obligations and promises, and after Vows of that kind I have made inquiry how I might evade them; and have sinfully prevaricated in that matter; and that not once only, but often.

5. It hath wounded my Conscience, and broken my peace. I have had sad reflections upon it when I have been most serious. I find if I were now to dye, the remembrance of this Game would greatly trouble me, and stare me in the face. I have read in the life of the famous *John Huss*, how he was greatly troubled for his using of this Game, a little before his death.

6. My using of it hath been scandalous and offensive to others. Some Godly Friends (as I have understood) have been grieved by it; and others (as I have reason to fear) have been hardned by it. Great inconveniencies have arisen from the places where, and the persons with whom I have us'd this Game.

7. My using of it hath occasioned much sin, as passion, strife, idle (if not lying) words, in my self or my Antagonist, or both. It hath caus'd the neglect of many duties both to God and Man.

8. My using of it doth evince, I have little self-denial in me. If I can't deny my self in a foolish Game, how can I think I either do or shall deny my self in greater matters? how shall I forsake all for Christ, when I can't forsake a Recreation for him.

9. My using it is altogether needless and unnecessary to me. As it hinders my Souls health, so it doth not further my bodily health. Such is my constitution (being Corpulent and Phlegmatick) that if I need any exercise, it is that which is stirring and labouring. I can't propound any end to my self in the use of it, but the pleasing of my flesh.

10. My using of it hath occasioned (at times) some little expence of Money. This is the least, and therefore I mention it last. I should think much to give that to relieve others wants, that I have wasted this way at several times upon my own wantonness.

I Conclude with the passage of Mr. B. in his *Christian Direct.* p. 464. Thus he writes. "I know not One person of an Hundred, or of many Hundred, that needeth any Game at all, there are such variety of better Exercises at hand to recreate them. And it is a sin to idle away any time which we can better improve. I confess my own nature was as much addicted to playfulness as most, and my judgment alloweth so much Recreation as is needful to my Health and Labour, and no more; but for all that, I find no need of any Game to recreate me. When my mind needs Recreation, I have variety of recreating Books, and Friends, and business to do; that when my body needeth it, the hardest labour that I can bear, is my best Recreation; Walking is instead of Games and Sports, as profitable to my body and more to my mind. If I am alone, I may improve that time in Meditation; if with others, I may improve it in profitable chearfull conference. I condemn not all Sports and Games in others, but I find none of them all to be best for my self. And when I observe how far the temper and life of Christ and his best servants, was from such recreations, I avoid them with the more suspicion. And I see but few but distaste it in Ministers (even Shooting, Bowling, and such more healthfull Games, to say nothing of these and such others as fit not the end of Recreation) therefore there is somewhat in it that Nature it self hath some suspicion of. That Student that needeth Chess or Cards to please his mind, I doubt hath a Carnal empty mind; if God, and all his Books, and all his Friends, &c. cannot suffice for this, there is some disease in it that should rather be cured than pleased. And for the Body, it is another kind of exercise that profits it.